



Attorney General Jon Bruning

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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Bruning Leads 7-state Coalition to File Lawsuit to Protect Religious Freedom**

LINCOLN-Attorney General Jon Bruning and 6 other state attorneys general today filed a lawsuit requesting a permanent injunction of the federal regulation that forces religious-affiliated organizations to support activity that violates the sacred beliefs of millions of Americans. Today's filing also includes co-plaintiffs Pius X Catholic High School, Catholic Social Services, The Catholic Mutual Relief Society of America and private citizens Stacy Molai and Sister Mary Catherine, CK.

"This regulation forces millions of Americans to choose between following religious convictions and complying with federal law," said Bruning. "This violation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment is a threat to every American, regardless of religious faith. We will not stand idly by while our constitutionally-guaranteed liberties are discarded by an administration that has sworn to uphold them."

The lawsuit alleges the rule regulating employers under the 2010 health care reform law announced last month infringes upon the constitutional right of religious liberty by requiring religious-affiliated organizations such as hospitals, schools and other community outreach programs to purchase employee health insurance that covers services contrary to their belief systems. The covered services mandated by the rule include contraceptives, sterilization and abortifacients.

By imposing such a mandate, the law exceeds the powers of the United States under the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which guarantee Americans the free exercise of religion.

On February 10, 2012, Attorney General Bruning drafted and sent a letter signed by 13 state attorneys general to U.S. HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner and Labor Secretary Hilda Solis requesting the employer rule be rescinded. That same day, the Administration announced a proposal that would shift the requirement from the employers to the health insurers themselves. However, the proposed change did nothing to address the fundamental 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment violation and was never officially made.

Five days after announcing the proposal, the Administration declined to withdraw implementation of the regulation and offered a promise to address the issue in the coming year.

Joining Nebraska in the challenge are Florida, Michigan, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.